

Komarek Faces Trial

## Visa Was Spy's Undoing

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Vladimir Komarek, 42, was he spy who came in from the cold — and then went back.

The former spy for French Intelligence, who had been "retired" from spying for 11 years, openly told his enemies he had travel plans, and they nabbed him.

Mr. Komarek — also known as Kazan — is the naturalized American citizen arrested in Prague, Czechoslovakia, Oct. 31, when the Soviet airliner he was riding made an unscheduled landing there because of "mechanical trouble."

The incident may become a significant roadblock to better relations between the U. S. and Czechoslovakia and Russia.

Washington has expressed its displeasure to both governments over the way Mr. Kazan-Komarek was "shanghaied."

**GOT VISA**

But the mystery remains why Mr. Kazan-Komarek, knowing he was wanted in Czechoslovakia on old charges of espionage activities, asked Czech authorities for a visa to travel in his native land. He got the visa, good for six months, and it led to his arrest.

Mr. Kazan-Komarek's espionage work began after World War II.

Czechoslovakia charges that he worked with a Czech anti-communist undercover group which slipped in and out of Czechoslovakia and helped sneak non-communist Czechs out of the country.

During one such foray, in 1951, Czechoslovakia charges, a member of Mr. Komarek's group killed a Czech security police officer with a gun supplied by Komarek.

Hunting Mr. Komarek and his associates, the Czechs in 1951 arrested an America newsman working in Prague. He was William Oatis of the Associated Press.

Mr. Oatis was wrongly accused of being linked to the Komarek group, was sentenced to 10 years, but was freed in 1953 during a series of amnesties proclaimed following Joseph Stalin's death.

Mr. Komarek, from a hiding place in West Germany, broadcast at that time over the anti-communist Radio Free Europe, denying the Czech charges of murder, and saying there was no Komarek-Oatis link.

**IN ABSENTIA**

In 1952, Czechoslovakia arrested 11 Czechs and a Yugoslav, charged them as Mr. Komarek's associates. Mr. Komarek was tried in absentia with them, and Mr. Oatis was brought from his prison cell to testify. Mr. Oatis said he never knew Mr. Komarek. But Mr. Komarek and the 12 were convicted.

Sources say this apparently broke up the Komarek band and Mr. Komarek began working for French intelligence.

In 1953 he came briefly to the U. S., married an American girl, and returned to Paris. Two years later he quit the spy game, came back here, settled in Massachusetts, and changed his name to Kazan. In 1960 he became a U. S. citizen.

He ran a travel agency and sold small airplanes, which required travel on his part to deliver them. High official U. S. sources say Kazan-Komarek never spied for the U. S.

**INVITED TO MOSCOW**

As a travel agent, Mr. Kazan-Komarek represented the Russian tourism office, intourist, arranging travel to Russia for Americans. Last Sept. 5 he received an invitation to a Moscow conference of travel agents in October, to prepare for the "1967 international tourist year."

But the preceding June Mr. Kazan-Komarek asked Czech authorities for a travel visa. He could not then have known he would later travel to Russia.

Officials here say he has since said he had no intention of visiting Czechoslovakia, even tho his mother still lives there. He did not explain why he wanted the visa. He had never got one previously. And he must have known of his 1952 trial and conviction in Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovakia now says that in 1963 charges of "high treason,

espionage and attempted murder" were brought against him for alleged activities in 1948-51. There is no explanation whether those were the same alleged activities for which he was convicted in 1952.

**UNSCHEDULED**

When Mr. Kazan-Komarek left Moscow Oct. 31 after the travel conference his Russian plane was scheduled to fly non-stop to Paris. Instead it put down in Prague and he was arrested.

Moscow told Washington the plane had radar trouble. But informed sources here say the Czechs, alerted by Mr. Komarek's visa request, learned his travel plans from Soviet secret police and arranged the arrest.

Moscow is red-faced because the Kremlin reportedly did not know its own police were setting up the trap.

Washington insists Mr. Kazan-Komarek be freed but "there has not yet been too favorable a response."

The Czechs want to keep on good terms with the U. S., remembering the Oatis affair. When they failed reporter Oatis, Washington cut off all trade with Czechoslovakia and it stayed cut until he was freed.

But the Kazan-Komarek case has now had so much publicity that Czechoslovakia feels it must go ahead with a trial. Informed opinion here is that he will be tried and convicted, probably this month, then perhaps thrown out of the country.

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